

Process Improvement is sustained when the improvement is based on our mission and values.

Vision:

To invent, develop, and deliver learning solutions for the 21st century.

Mission:

- Identify community needs
- Provide accessible, quality education and training
- Promote opportunities for lifelong learning

What is Process Improvement?

At Kirkwood, improvement is both a process and a competency. Our goal is to equip teams with the basic tools for Process Improvement and practical information needed to initiate and successfully carry out process improvement activities. "Process improvement" means making things better, not just fighting fires or managing crises. It means setting aside the practice of blaming people for problems or failures. It is a way of looking at how we can do our work better. One of the tools we use is "Lean." According to work-placelean©, "Lean is a **systematic** approach to identifying and eliminating **waste** (non-value added activities) through continuous improvement by **flowing** the product or service at the **pull** of the customer."

This may be the technical definition of Lean, but what is it really? Lean is a way to evaluate how we work. It helps us identify waste in our systems and strategically use tools and techniques to remove waste from our processes. Lean is not a tool used for eliminating people or making jobs harder. Lean is about working smarter.

There are some basic beliefs of Lean that must be in place for it to be successful:

- Leadership must be involved and committed to change.
- Those doing the job know best how to improve the job.
- Lean is a continuous process with ongoing opportunities for improvement.
- There must be open communication across the organization.

In our first issue of the Process Improvement Update, we spotlight a few teams and their journeys using Lean tools. You will notice they are all at different stages and they all proceeded in different ways.

Principles and Values:

- Mutual Respect
- Integrity
- Open Communication
- Servant Leadership
- Partnership
- Innovation
- Excellence
- Lifelong Learning

PSEO/Career Academies

In July 2007, the PSEO/Career Academy team began the journey of improving their processes. When they began to work, they knew they had a wonderful cross-functional group of people who were doing the best they could in a very messy process, trying to ensure that as many high school students as possible had the chance to take approved college level classes. They invited members from every step in the process, including two high school counselors, to represent their customers. Below are a few of the significant changes they implemented:

- Books for PSEO classes are loaned instead of given to the student. This produced an estimated cost savings of roughly \$40,000 in one year.
- All books are delivered via the GWAEA at no cost to Kirkwood, creating shipping savings throughout the year.
- Section building of academy classes have moved from the hands of all of the individual centers to a single team that inputs them, creating a consistent, manageable process.

CURRENT & UPCOMING LEAN PROJECTS:

- CCID
- HR Payroll
- Information Center/Switch Board
- Media Services Problem Calls
- Continuing Education Lumens Implementation
- Resource Center/ Advance Program New Student Contact

If you know of an area or process that could benefit by applying Lean tools, contact cheri.kampman@kirkwood.edu

Scholarships

The scholarship process began its Lean journey in December 2007. The main goals were to eliminate wasteful steps, become more efficient, and ensure they were servicing the program in the best manner and benefitting the most students. Jody Donaldson initiated this project to challenge the process; many things seemed to be redundant and she was afraid they were missing opportunities.

"Lean really taught us to think outside the box. When you take a process step-by-step, you can see gaps," Donaldson said. "We discovered to serve our clients (students) better, we needed to take some processes another step further."

The major changes, as a result of this process improvement project, are:

- Increased the number of scholarship applications by 3X's
- Increased the scholarship money awarded from \$1,047,000 in 2005-2006 to \$1,740,000 in 2009-2010
- Consistent dates have been set for each step in the process, creating consistency for all involved.
- Moved from one round of funding to three rounds of funding.
- Created a more manageable process to handle additional scholarship funds.

"It feels good to have consistent dates in place and to have reinforcement on why we do some things the way we do," Donaldson said. "I think we are serving the clients better with two and three rounds of funding. We have increased our number of scholarship applications 3x. Having the Lean process completed, it made it more manageable after our campaign to handle additional scholarship funds."

48-hour OWI Program

The 48-hour OWI class is a state-mandated course provided through Kirkwood's Continuing Education Division. This group gathered to work on their process in January 2009. Due to clients and state mandates, this was a labor-intensive and time-consuming process. This group wanted to look at how they could gain efficiencies in the class registration process. One of the biggest changes recommended was payment at the time of registration. With the existing process, they had a high number of absentees. They gained the following improvements within the first six months of implementation:

- Reduced the number of times they touch each application from 7 to 4 times, saving sufficient time for each application.
- Dropped the average no-show rate per class from 6 to 1, with a tuition of \$350 per seat. This is an average increase of \$1,750 in income per class.
- Began completing all required paperwork upon registration, reducing the mailings to each student from three to one, creating a savings of over \$1,500 per year in postage alone.

Credit Student Experience Team

When the application to letter project team was assembled, they knew 21,228 unique applications were processed between Fall 2007 and Summer 2008. A high percentage of newly applied students were not getting welcome letters from Kirkwood within 30 days. It was believed the correspondence inconsistencies were tied to the lack of standard protocol.

Tests of the system showed that anywhere from 20 to 40 percent of students who applied did not receive letters from Kirkwood in 30 days. Some departments sent k numbers in letters, others did not. Plus, various departments communicated next steps in the registration process several different ways on their Web sites or in letters.

This team implemented several changes to streamline this process and to create a better experience for the student:

- Reduced application acceptance rules from 138 to 6 (department specific instead of program specific in past).
- Number of applicants is tracked on each upload and checked with the numbers sent to ensure no students are missed.
- E-mail is generated thanking the applicant and informing him/her to watch for a letter from the President.
- Standardized the letter to one version, and gave it importance using Office of the President stationery. Letters are mailed two times per week and Career Academy/PSEO/HS Completion students are eliminated from the mailing to avoid confusion.
- Included a temporary EagleCard with the new letter to call attention to the student's k number. Standardized next steps in the enrollment process link is included on the back of this card.
- Standardized enrollment steps on the Kirkwood Web site.
- Worked with a county center for phone calls (Williamsburg Center phone number is used instead of multiple departments' phone numbers.)
- Switched most student follow-up communications to electronic, although an opt out is available if a student does not have computer access.
- Adjusted timing on welcome e-mails from Admissions.

So what did this team learn from this journey:

- Follow-up meetings with the core group allow them to troubleshoot problems in a timely and organized manner.
- A cross-functional stakeholder team provided their perspectives and expertise in a variety of situations. No one department could have created this success.
- People support what they build.

“Lean is a journey, not a state.”

If you know of an area or process that could benefit by applying Lean tools, contact cheri.kampman@kirkwood.edu